

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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January 17, 2020

The Honorable Chairman Ajit V. Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to request that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) expeditiously initiate a review of the recent communications network outages in Puerto Rico following the two earthquakes that struck the island on January 6 and 7. We are particularly concerned by the widespread nature of these outages and the apparent lingering fragility of communications networks on the island.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake struck Puerto Rico on Monday, January 6.¹ Then, another 6.5 magnitude earthquake struck in the early morning on Tuesday, January 7.² The quakes collapsed buildings on the island, and at least one fatality and eight injuries were reported.³ To make matters worse, the Electric Power Authority in Puerto Rico on Tuesday reported an island-wide power outage.⁴

After the second quake struck the island, the FCC initiated its disaster reporting protocols,⁵ with the first status report being issued on Wednesday.⁶ That report indicated that 31.7 percent of cell sites were down in affected areas. Moreover, cable and wireline communications companies reported that 258,637 subscribers lacked service.⁷ We are concerned by the apparent fragility of

¹ *5.8 Magnitude Earthquake Rocks Puerto Rico*, ABC News (Jan. 6, 2020) (abcnews.go.com/US/58-magnitude-earthquake-rocks-puerto-rico/story?id=68092398).

² *State of Emergency Declared in Puerto Rico After 6.4 Magnitude Earthquake Kills 1*, ABC News (Jan. 7, 2020) (abcnews.go.com/News/puerto-rico-earthquake-magnitude-66-quake-hits-island/story?id=68111390).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Federal Communications Commission, *Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau Announces Activation of Disaster Information Reporting System in Response to Puerto Rico Earthquakes*, Public Notice, DA 20-26 (Jan. 7, 2020).

⁶ Federal Communications Commission, *Communications Status Report for Areas Impacted by Puerto Rico Earthquakes* (Jan. 8, 2020) (docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-361762A1.pdf).

⁷ *See Id.*

the communications infrastructure. Indeed, we worry that communications networks, and supporting infrastructure on the island, may have never fully recovered following the 95 percent outages caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017.⁸

With that in mind, it is imperative for the FCC to conduct an after-action report examining the effects of these recent earthquakes on communications networks in Puerto Rico. We believe this review should also include an evaluation of ongoing factors contributing to the delicate state of these networks and what steps the Commission, and its federal partners, can take to improve the situation.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter. Please provide a response by February 7, 2020. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Christopher Cox in Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke's Office at Christopher.Cox@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress

⁸ Federal Communications Commission, *2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season Impact on Communications Report and Recommendations*, Public Safety Docket No. 17-344 (Aug. 2018) (docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-353805A1.pdf).